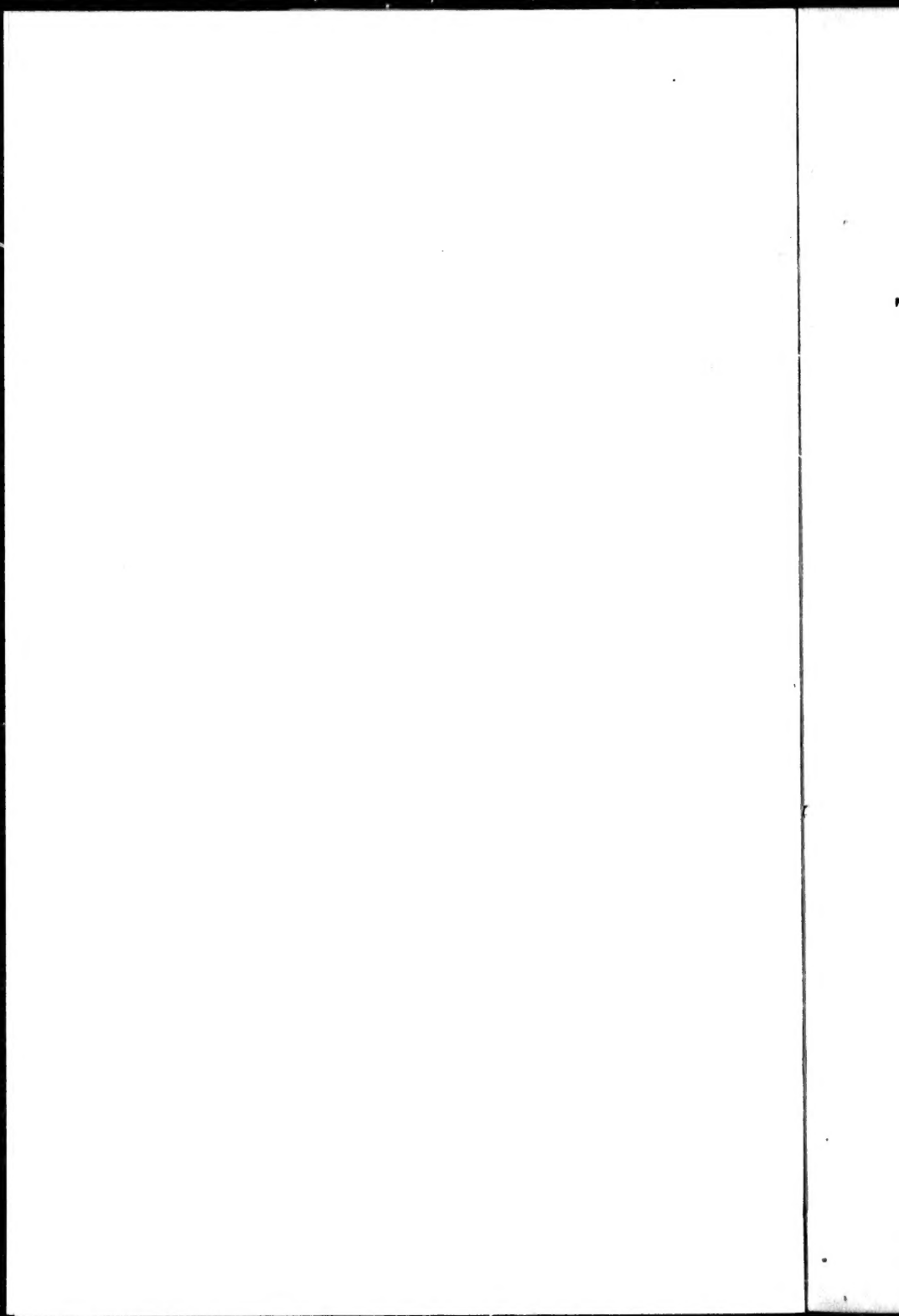




THE
SAFETY AND EXPEDIENCY
OF CONCEDED
THE CATHOLIC CLAIMS;
EVINCED BY THE GOOD EFFECTS OF
THE CONCESSIONS IN CANADA,
AND
THE DIFFERENT STATES OF EUROPE;
WITH THE OPINIONS OF
PITT, BURKE, FOX, AND WYNDHAM,
THEREON.

By CIVIS.

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THE
SAFETY AND EXPEDIENCY
OF CONCEDED THE
CATHOLIC CLAIMS, &c.

THE following observations, on the subject of the Catholic Claims, are principally confined to that article which seems to have excited the greatest alarm, *viz.*, the claim to a Seat in Parliament. The opposers of this claim fancy they see, in its eventual concession, nothing less than the overthrow of our Constitution, both in Church and State.

If there be any question, in which we should distrust public feeling, it is one which involves popular prejudices on the score of religion. Apprehensions, similar to those now entertained, have at all times prevailed, where questions of this nature have become the subject of legislative consideration. Thus, when the Bill by which the Jews were

naturalized was brought forward, the most violent clamour was raised against it ; and a Petition was received from the City of London, praying that it might not pass into a law, as it would be prejudicial to the interests of trade, and would, moreover, endanger our happy constitution, both in Church and State. But long experience has proved, that the admission of Jews, not only into the City, but even into Downing Street, has not been attended with those direful consequences, so alarmingly anticipated.

So also, when the Union with Scotland took place, about 120 years ago, a great alarm was occasioned by the introduction of sixteen Scotch Peers into the House of Lords, and forty-five Members into the House of Commons, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells said, that they were going to expose themselves to a danger " which the tongue could scarcely speak."

But a more modern and more striking instance of groundless alarm, is noticed by Mr. Burke, in the following passage, from his celebrated Letter to Sir H. Langrish, Bart. It respects the danger to our late American Colonies, from the Catholic reli-

gion being established by the Parliament as the State religion of Canada. "It is true, that some persons, and among them one eminent Divine, predicted, at that time, that, by this step, we should lose our Dominions in America. He foretold, that the Pope would send his emissaries thither; that the Canadians would fall in with France, declare their independence, and draw, or force our other Colonies into the same design. The independence happened according to his prediction, but in directly the reverse order. All our *Protestant* Colonies revolted; they joined themselves to France; and it so happened that *Popish Canada* (whose inhabitants were naturally attached to France, their parent country) was the only place which preserved its fidelity—the only place where Catholic France got no footing—the only peopled Colony on the Continent, which now remains to Great Britain—and last year, when we settled a Protestant Church there, conjointly with the Catholic, we had no dread for that establishment, because we permitted the French Catholics, in the utmost latitude of the description, to be free subjects. They are good subjects, I have no doubt;

but I will not allow that any French Canadian Catholics are better men, or better citizens, than the Irish of the same communion."

In like manner, when the several concessions were granted to the Irish Catholics, in the years 1782 and 1791, the same unfounded alarm prevailed; in reference to which, Mr. Pitt, in his Speech, in May 1805, thus expresses himself: "I felt satisfaction in the repeal of those Laws against the Catholics, which have been abolished; and, from the abolition of which, I certainly am not one who infers that danger to the country with which some gentlemen seem to be so deeply impressed; nor do I think *that the introduction of a certain proportion of Catholics into the Imperial Parliament, would be likely to be productive of any influence or effect detrimental or injurious to the welfare of the State, and security of the Constitution.*" Accordingly, if we consult history, we shall find that, at the Reformation, Edward the Sixth did not exclude Catholics from his Council board; nor, when he was excommunicated by the Pope, for the share he took in bringing about the Reformation, did he therefore exclude Catholics

from offices of power and dignity ; and when a rebellion, in consequence of such excommunication, broke out in the North, Lord de Clifford, a Catholic, was sent to quell it. Queen Elizabeth, too, when the Spanish Armada was hovering round the coast, entrusted the defence of Dover Castle (at that time the most important fortress in the country) to a Catholic Nobleman ; and (what showed still more confidence in the fidelity of her Catholic subjects) she appointed Lord Howard of Effingham (a Catholic Lord) to the command of the Fleet, and subsequently made him Lord High Admiral of England—an office of such power and importance, that succeeding monarchs have thought it too dangerous to entrust to any individual, and have therefore placed it in the hands of a commission.

Thus we see that, from the time of the Reformation till the Declaration against Transubstantiation, enacted in the reign of Charles the Second (a period of upwards of 160 years), the Catholics actually enjoyed the rights they now claim. Now, if, at the time, when they must have felt peculiarly sore and irritated at the recent overthrow of

their religion, and when, consequently, they must have been stimulated by the most powerful principles of human action, to regain their lost ascendancy, and when, moreover, the Catholic population bore an infinitely greater proportion to that of the Protestant than it does at the present day, they could be allowed, notwithstanding all these adverse circumstances, to retain their seats in Parliament for so long a period, without such dreadful consequences ensuing to the Church and State as are now so alarmingly predicted; and if, in the reign of Charles the Second, when the King himself was secretly a Catholic, when the Queen, and the Heir Presumptive to the Crown, were avowedly Catholics, and when the Catholics sat in Parliament, they could not, with all those circumstances in their favour, prevent the Act from passing, which was to exclude them, for the future, from sitting in Parliament, what rational grounds, in the face of those historical and stubborn facts, can there be for their exclusion at the present moment, when none of the foregoing circumstances, so favourable to the objects they are supposed to have in view, are in existence, and when,

consequently, their ardour of pursuit and prospect of success must necessarily be proportionably abated? It will not, I presume, be conceded, that the friends of the established Church are less zealous than their predecessors, or less vigilant for its welfare.

When the Catholic claims were under discussion, in the year 1805, Mr. Wyndham said, "I relinquished the administration, because I thought the measure of Emancipation *indispensable to the safety of the Empire*; and I have seen nothing since to change my opinion." And again, when the same topic was renewed, in the year 1808, he said, "With respect to the comparison so well made by my Right Honourable Friend (Mr. Grattan), between the two kinds of danger, of which it is necessary to choose one, I should most unquestionably prefer the danger (uncertain, if not chimerical) of giving to the Catholics a power which might, ultimately, invest them with a considerable influence in the State, to the *terrible danger*, which the refusal of their just claims must, in my apprehension, *inevitably occasion*." And he closes his speech with these emphatic words, "I am anxious

that the subject should be fully discussed, *convinced, as I am, that the friends of the Catholic Emancipation will, ultimately, triumph over every obstacle that can be thrown in their way.*"

Let us now consider what has been the effect of conciliation and concession on the conduct of Catholics in other countries, and in what manner they have conducted themselves where they have formed, not merely a small part, but a majority of the Legislature. In the year 1649, the Catholic State of Maryland, in North America, passed an Act, giving to Christians of all denominations equal rights; although the neighbouring State of Virginia, and the New England State, persecuted the Catholics with the utmost rigour: Virginia being peopled by Church of England men, who persecuted the Presbyterians, and other Protestant Dissenters; and New England by rigid Presbyterians, who carried on similar persecutions against Church of England men. This Act, however, was repealed, in 1654, by the Presbyterian party, which, aided by the Cromwellian power in England, gained the ascendancy in the Legislature, and thereupon

passed an Act, granting toleration to all Protestant Dissenters, but expressly excepting Catholics and Prelatists. This Act continued in force, till the Catholics again obtained a majority in the Legislature; which, however, they were not able to effect (though they were by far the most numerous body in the State) till the year 1676, when they immediately re-enacted the law of 1649, which continued in force till 1692, when King William sent over a force sufficient to overpower the Catholics; whereupon an Act passed, excluding them from all offices of power or trust. Thus it appears that, in Maryland, when the Presbyterians were in power, they persecuted the Papists and the Prelatists; when the Prelatists were in power, they persecuted the Presbyterians and the Papists; but when the Papists were in power, they persecuted neither the Prelatists nor the Presbyterians, nor any other sect, but gave perfect freedom of conscience to Christians of all denominations. Such was the relative toleration of these respective sects.

Edmund Burke, in adverting to the claims of the Irish Catholics, cites the good effect

of conciliation among the Welsh. He observes, "that Wales was reduced by Edward the First; but, though then conquered, it was scarcely looked upon as part of the realm of England. The old Constitution was destroyed, but in its place was substituted an heterogeneous monster, something between Government and hostility. The manners of the nation followed the genius of the Government. The people were ferocious, restive, savage, and uncultivated. Wales, within itself, was in perpetual disorder, and it kept the frontiers of England in perpetual alarm. It was known only to England by incursion and invasion. The Parliament attempted to subdue the fierce spirit of the public, by all sorts of rigorous laws. They disarmed them by statute, and prohibited the sending of all sorts of arms into the principality. All this while, Wales rode this country like an incubus, and an Englishman travelling in Wales, could not go out of the high road without danger of being murdered. The march of the human mind is slow. It was not till after 200 years discovered, that, by an eternal law, Providence has decreed vexation to violence, and

poverty to rapine. At length, in the twenty-seventh of Henry the Eighth, a statute was passed, giving the Welsh the benefits of the British Constitution. From that moment, as by a charm, tumult subsided, obedience was restored, and peace, order, and civilization followed in the train of liberty."

Similar was the evil, and similar was the remedy of conciliation, in the case of Scotland. For a century the English Government had endeavoured to subdue the stubborn attachment of the Scotch to Presbyterianism, and, with the point of the bayonet, to enforce (as they have attempted in Ireland) the tenets of the English Church, by enacting pains and penalties, and enforcing confiscations. They erected gibbets, and made the scaffold flow with human blood; but could not convert the Scotch Presbyterians. They were just as unsuccessful with them, as they have been since with the Irish Catholics; and, like the Irish, the Scotch only clung the more to their religion, because it was persecuted by the English. They did not, indeed, put up with the system of persecution as patiently as the Irish have done; they often broke out into open and avowed

rebellion. It is true, they were often defeated, but they were never subdued. Scotland was, then, what Ireland is now, the weakness of England. At length, however, the proper and only remedy was applied, persecution ceased—the Scotch attained not mere freedom for their creed, but its establishment as the creed of the nation. Behold! as the effect of this concession, a tranquil, a peaceable, and an industrious people—the best strength of the British Throne, and a main pillar of British power and independence.

— But to come to more modern times. In 1792, the Catholic Diet of Hungary gave the most perfect religious freedom to their Protestant fellow countrymen; and though the latter did not constitute one-fourth of the population of that country, yet they obtained one-half of the Churches and one-half of the tythes. In Catholic France, too, at this day, Protestants enjoy, not a nominal, but a real equalization of civil rights; their persons protected, their Churches respected, their clergy paid; and paid, too, more liberally than the Catholic clergy, by this Catholic State. And, in Spain, let it be remembered, that the Cortes, which met at Cadiz, though

composed of more than three-fourths of Priests, decreed the abolition of the Inquisition ; and, in abhorrence of its existence, ordered salt and ashes to be strewed over the spots where its prisons stood. In Bavaria, too, the king has not only recently emancipated his Protestant subjects, but has raised them from a state of exclusion to a complete participation in all the rights and privileges of his other subjects. And, finally, our own Sovereign, as King of Hanover, has applied the same enlightened and liberal principles to his Catholic subjects, who now enjoy the same civil rights as their Protestant fellow subjects.

Were there, indeed, any rational ground for withholding from the Catholics a concession of their claims, is it conceivable that the principal Protestant landholders and merchants in Ireland would have petitioned both Houses of Parliament in their favour, and that almost all the Protestant noblemen of that country should have joined in a declaration to the same effect ? or that these claims would have been advocated by the ablest statesmen of all parties, *viz.*—by Pitt, Fox, Burke, Sheridan, Wyndham, Melville,

Romilly, Grattan, Grey, Grenville, Lansdowne, Londonderry, and Canning, the last of whom is confessedly the ablest and most consummate statesman of the present day? The very supposition is preposterous; and were it true, as is asserted by their opponents, that the Catholics are the same intolerant and persecuting sect as they represent them to have been ages ago—ever ready to propagate their faith by fire and faggot, can it be for a moment supposed, that the other nations of Europe would have admitted Protestants and Catholics to an equal participation of official trusts, as all the principal States of Europe have done, with the exception of the bigoted Governments of Spain and Portugal? This very important fact is noticed by Mr. Fox, in his celebrated Speech on the Catholic Claims, in the year 1805, in the following terms:—"Is there, in Europe, a State or country that does not employ persons of different religious persuasions in the highest offices? When bigotry was at its height in France, and when it led Henry the Fourth to renounce the Protestant, and embrace the Catholic Religion, did it ever occur to any one to

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suggest that the Duke of Sully, his minister (who was a Protestant), could not advise with him about public affairs?—was he ever accused of being a bad minister because he was a Protestant? No one ever objected to M. Necker, the minister of Louis the Sixteenth, because he was a Protestant? Does not the Catholic Emperor of Germany employ Protestants in the various important offices of his dominions? The government of his capital is intrusted to Prince Ferdinand of Wirtemberg, a Protestant. The first employment in the service of Russia is filled by Prince Sartorizki, whose religion is that of the Lutheran Church. With regard to Switzerland, the employment of Protestants has been, perhaps, less than in other States; but they have frequently filled offices of Government conjointly with Catholics.” To the above Prime Ministers of France, who have been Protestants, may be added the late Duke of Richelieu; yet the people of that country, neither then, nor on former occasions, appeared alarmed for the safety of their Church or State. Could the same be said

of us, were (not the Prime Minister merely but) one of the inferior members of the Cabinet a Catholic? On the contrary, were such an event to take place, what a general panic and consternation would be excited! Yet, we profess to be the most liberal and enlightened nation under the sun, though our conduct, in the case supposed, would prove us to be directly the reverse:—so much do nations, as well as individuals, deceive themselves with respect to their real characters. Let us endeavour, however, to open our eyes, and in some degree to imitate, if we cannot aspire to equal, the liberality of our neighbours; let us dispel from our minds, on the present occasion, those alarms and apprehensions which ignorance and bigotry have generated, and professional prejudices have fostered, but which the enlightened nations of Europe have discarded, as ill suited to the present intellectual state of the world. To this end, the following remarks, extracted from the Petition of the English Catholics in the year 1817, are particularly forcible:—"When, in almost every state of civilized Europe, the difference of religious opinion is not considered

a ground for civil disabilities ; when, in most of those realms where the religion is Catholic, dissenters from the established Church are admitted to the full enjoyment of their civil and social rights ; and, when no instance of any inconvenience has occurred from such equal participation ; but when, on the contrary, it has been uniformly found that prosperity and concord have been its immediate, as well as its natural consequences, we cannot think that this country, holding itself up as a shining example to the world, of courage, constancy, and liberality, will long continue to refuse that, which the nations who look up to her wisdom as well as to her generosity, *have not feared to grant.*"

Should, however, the conciliatory course here contemplated, unfortunately not be adopted by the Legislature, I cannot but concur in the opinion expressed by Mr. Wyndham, that the most alarming consequences are to be apprehended ; since it no longer admits of a doubt, that the Catholics, amounting to about six millions, and feeling (as recent events have taught them to do) their own strength and importance, will

take the first opportunity of gaining, by force, what is refused to their solicitations, and such an opportunity, the first war we may be engaged in, will inevitably present. Is it not, then, the part of wisdom (by anticipating such a crisis) to make a virtue of a necessity, and to *concede that graciously, which we must otherwise yield to compulsion.*

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